



Opera on site: the collaborative work *Architect* is recorded at a concrete waterfall designed by its protagonist, the architect Louis Kahn

buildings. It is not a biographical work. The characters are the Architect, the Woman (reflecting Kahn's tangled romantic world) and the Trickster, who is actually Momus, the Greek god of mockery, and who morphs into several other characters.

The opera's prologue and six scenes are set to music of haunting atmosphere and colour. Lewis Spratlan composed the vocal and instrumental music, which employs contemporary language with potent and poetic mastery. His writing also served as the basis for the gleaming interludes of electroacoustic music by Kallick and John Downey.

Spratlan's score runs a gamut of operatic conventions that are rendered fresh, affecting and witty. The Architect and Momus, depicting an engineer, sing a delightful Italianate paean to concrete, of all things. The Woman has a mad scene. As the work ends, the three characters hail the principal elements (water, fire) that comprise 'the glowing source of all imagination for science and for art'.

The DVD presents the work with watercolours (by Michiko Theurer), videos and photographs of Kahn buildings that complement the excellent performance featuring three vibrant soloists – soprano Julia

Fox, tenor Jeffrey Lantz and baritone Richard Lalli – and a superb ensemble of nine players led by Mark Lane Swanson. **Donald Rosenberg**

'Our American Roots'

Barber Cello Sonata, Op 6 **Copland** Billy the Kid – Waltz; Celebration **Gershwin** Porgy and Bess – It ain't necessarily so; My man's gone now (both arr Heifetz/E Feldman). Three Preludes (arr E Feldman) **G Walker** Cello Sonata **Emmanuel Feldman** vc **Joy Cline Phinney** pf
Delos © DE3449 (54' • DDD)



Americana from Boston cellist and new music champion

Cellist Emmanuel Feldman begins and ends his new disc, 'Our American Roots', with transcriptions of beloved music by Gershwin and Copland. But the real highlights on this recording are sonatas by Samuel Barber and George Walker, both of which deserve more attention than they receive.

The Barber is the product of a young composer (22) who clearly had the music of Romantic composers in his ear. Yet the Sonata doesn't mimic eminent predecessors. It claims dramatic intensity and harmonic spice, as well

as lyrical qualities that would become Barber trademarks. The slow movement doesn't just brood; it also briefly races down the road.

Walker's Sonata, from 1957, is something of a revelation, showing the composer's command of architectural and expressive elements. There are hints of autumnal Brahms here and there, and subtle nods to jazz, which give the music a distinctive sense of animation. Why this splendid piece doesn't often show up on recitals is anyone's guess.

Cellists are always on the lookout to expand their performance horizons, even though they have a healthy amount of solo repertoire. Feldman, an artist who combines communicative urgency with tonal splendour, makes something personal of five Gershwin pieces – two from *Porgy and Bess* (adapted from Heifetz arrangements) and the Three Preludes (in versions by Feldman himself).

Like the Gershwin, Copland's own arrangements for cello and piano of the Waltz and Celebration from *Billy the Kid* are given generous and detailed treatment by Feldman and pianist Joy Cline Phinney, who is lucid, flexible and sensitive throughout this engrossing programme.

Donald Rosenberg